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One Hundred Eight Congress  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Select Committee on Homeland Security  
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2004

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The Honorable Tom Ridge  
Department of Homeland Security  
Washington, D.C. 20528

Dear Secretary Ridge:

Today, the *Wall Street Journal* reported that a potential budget shortfall of \$1.2 billion has resulted in a hiring freeze affecting the Bureaus of Customs and Border Protection (CBP) and Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). A hiring freeze has also been instituted at the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (CIS). All of these entities perform front-line missions critical to securing our nation.

Specifically, the *Wall Street Journal* article stated that a \$1.2 billion shortfall exists within the budgets of ICE and CBP, representing 12.3% of the total funding for both agencies. If this is the case, and the hiring freeze must be maintained, our nation's security could be significantly impacted.

It is important for the Select Committee to have a full understanding of any budget pressures facing the DHS. I request that you immediately provide the Select Committee with a detailed assessment of whether the \$1.2 billion budget shortfall exists, the reasons for its existence, potential remediation efforts, and the impact of such efforts – as well as the current personnel hiring freeze – on security measures at our nation's borders, sea ports and airways. The Select Committee stands ready to provide assistance to the DHS, but finds it inconsistent with the oversight responsibility of the Select Committee to learn of significant hiring freezes or budget shortfalls from a newspaper article. The point of contact on my staff on this issue is David Schanzer, 202-226-2616.

Sincerely,

Jim Turner  
Ranking Member

cc: The Honorable Christopher Cox